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Classified By: Acting DepPolCouns V. Carver for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary

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¶11. (C) The EU will consider that fact that the EU-Africa Summit takes place in Lisbon Dec. 8-9 a success in and of itself, particularly if President Mugabe does not succeed in running away with every headline from the summit. Officials in Brussels do not expect breakthroughs or even much substantive discussions on critical issues, such as Darfur, Somalia, and the Ethiopia-Eritrea border conflict, although bilateral discussions on those issues will take place on the margins. Mugabe remains the summit wild card, and, as of Dec. 6, the EU was still working out its strategy on dealing with him. EU officials say they are leaning toward having the Dutch raise Mugabe's human rights and governance record, letting Mugabe respond, and then having High Rep. Solana address it again. With more than 50 heads of state from Africa and the EU expected, the large plenaries will allow each delegation to give only brief statements, which are expected to be positive and rather general. Summit participants are expected to issue a short Political Declaration and give final approval to the EU-Africa Joint Strategy, which differs little from the EU-Afric Strategy approved by the EU in 2005. One important change is that the EU will begin addressing Africa as a whole, using the African Union as the main focal point for negotiations, instead of dealing with individual African states, as the EU historically has done. End Summary.

The Mugabe Factor

¶12. (C) After a seven-year gap since the last EU-Africa Summit, EU and Member State officials say the most important aspect of the summit is simply that it takes place. With intervening efforts at summit organization derailed over the contentious issue of whether to invite Mugabe, Portugal decided early in its EU Presidency that it was going to invite every African head of state, Mugabe included. Portugal secured him a waiver from the EU travel ban placed on most top Zimbabwean officials under an allowed exemption for EU conferences that addressed political issues. So far, only the UK plans not to send its PM in protest. But contacts at the Dutch and German Permanent Representations said this week they are nervous that Portugal keeps postponing a decision on how to deal with Mugabe during the Summit. With only hours to go, the EU had not decided who will bring up Mugabe's democracy and human rights record and when.

¶13. (C) If the subject is not raised directly with Mugabe during the Summit, EU Member States will face public criticism from many of their constituents as well as human rights groups and NGOs. A Dutch diplomat said many EU Member

States hoped that either Portugal or High Representative Javier Solana would speak to Mugabe on behalf of the EU during the summit, but Portugal appeared unwilling to take on that role. The timing of the intervention is also tricky. Portugal does not want to address Mugabe in the morning of Dec. 8 for fear that the "Mugabe issue" will overtake the rest of the agenda. On the other hand, waiting until later in the summit runs the risk that Mugabe and his delegation will decide to leave before then. Key contacts in the Council Secretariat said late Dec. 6 that the current thinking was to address this in the afternoon session December 8. The strategy they were leaning toward was to have the Dutch delegation raise Mugabe's human rights and governance record, which was expected to provoke an outraged response from Mugabe. Then Solana would step in as a calm and elder statesman to make a few pointed comments about the EU's expectations for Zimbabwe.

Joint EU-Africa Strategy

¶4. (SBU) The key substantive aspect of the summit will be the Joint EU-Africa Strategy, drafted after many months of consultations between the EU and African states. It reads very much like the EU-Africa Strategy adopted by the EU in 2005 with the important difference that it calls on the EU to deal with Africa as a whole, not on a state-by-state basis as it has in the past. The key interlocutor will be the African Union, and the EU is about to establish a new EU Delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa. It is one of the EU's concrete deliverables for the summit, and both the Council and Commission this week approved the appointment of Koen Vervaeke to head the delegation. Vervaeke has been Solana's key advisor on Africa as the head of the Council Secretariat

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Africa Unit since 2003. He also has good relations with Commissioner Louis Michel, a fellow Belgian. He will report to both Solana and Michel and will have the title of both EU Special Representative and Head of the EC Delegation to the AU, a joining of Commission and Council functions (a harbinger of things to come, as combining such Commission and Council functions is envisioned institutionally in the new EU Reform Treaty).

Partnership of Equals?

¶5. (C) In addition to the Mugabe issue, EU officials are concerned that African objections about the current Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) being negotiated between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries could cast a shadow over the summit. Because of a WTO ruling, the EU must end preferential trade agreements with the ACP countries as of Jan. 1, and many African countries say it will disadvantage them in the global marketplace. Many African officials have told the EU they believe the new agreements do not support the spirit of the new Joint Strategy and represent instead the EU imposing something on Africa that it does not want. Only a handful of African states have signed EPAs with the EU, taking away another hoped-for summit deliverable for the EU.

¶6. (C) Returning to the role of the AU, several Member State contacts say they have misgivings about the reality treating the AU as an equal partner, given the AU's lack of capacity and the unwillingness of African states to cede competence to the AU on substantive issues. But Commissioner Michel spoke passionately at a Brussels think tank event Nov. 30 about the need for Europe to move away from its donor-recipient relationship with Africa to one of equal partnership. He characterized the U.S. strategy toward Africa as one centered on security and oil concerns, and noted that China, India, and Brazil, among others, also had clear strategies toward Africa whereas Europe has not had a well-defined Africa strategy until now.

Comment

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¶7. (C) In sum, EU and Member State officials are approaching the summit seriously and believe Portugal is the right country at the right time to hold such a gathering of EU and African delegations. There is great concern about orchestrating the intervention with Mugabe and some concern over the EPA issue, but, in general, the summit is expected to be largely a chance for the EU and AU to express their mutual concerns about specific issues as well as to review a future roadmap for cooperation. While the Portuguese Presidency will point to this summit as one of its crowning achievements, we view such a claim as hyperbole.

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